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Man in One and Many Worlds

A discussion paper prepared by the Department on the Laity, together with reactions to it from several sources, and an invitation for further comment

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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES GENEVA

The following "paper for group judgment and comment" has been evolved over more than a year of experimentation with drafts by the WCC Department on the Laity. From another angle it raises questions of "spheres of witness". The Department warmly invites frank reactions, as contributions to an on-going study process.[1]

Pam
Misc.

Man in One and Many Worlds

Stop that roadmaking gang ! People cause one another enough harm without being brought closer. Stop that surgeon ! The man whom he is rescuing from death will go back to exploit his fellow-men. Stop that scientist, who is on the verge of producing life ! What monsters may be born if his discoveries fall into unscrupulous hands ? Stop that woman from giving birth ! Who can tell whether her child will be a Hitler or a Marie Curie ?

Men go on making roads. Surgeons heal without enquiring into the morals or worth of their patients. Scientists take the risk of letting the knowledge and power they gain pass into other human hands. Women bear children with no guarantee beforehand regarding their sex, their future health, or their future character.

Is there some blindness in the human race which causes people to behave like this ? Where do they get the confidence that labouring, healing, doing research, bearing children will turn out well — in spite of all the evidence before their eyes that much work, much healing, much research, much childbearing only brings humanity more trouble. Or does life have meaning and direction, and can an ultimate hope be held out for it ? Are roadmen, surgeons, scientists and mothers but a few of a great company who play this hunch — that all the scattered bits of life belong together, and that through them a unity can be discerned ?

One may find meaning in smaller worlds, yet not relate these worlds. Many people spend their time in worlds of work, home, leisure, and voluntary service in their community. Others in countries involved in rapid social change have almost, as it were, to live in worlds which are centuries apart, feeling at one and the same time the pull of old traditions and the pull of new ways which supplant them. This process may make life richer and more varied than it was in the past. For instance, women who rear families are much less likely in the future to have to find their whole world in their home. They will increasingly share in the larger life which is opening out. Over against this we must reckon with a serious threat. It is that life is getting broken up into these different worlds. A man may go to industrial work during the day, come home to his family, then attend a Town Council meeting in the later evening — and have three different suits of ethics to wear, one for each occasion. A diver at a Scottish dockyard said, "My home is my castle and nothing is too good for my wife and child. I will do anything for them. But when I am down in the water, the dangerous and awkward jobs are pushed onto someone else every time, if I get my way." His neighbour, an engineer,

[1] The following specific suggestions are made by the Department on the Laity : "(1) It would be a particular help if this document were used not only by groups specially brought into being for the purpose, but by already existing groups in church and society. (2) It would help our whole thinking on the theme if case-studies were supplied from different parts of the world, to illustrate situations of particular difficulty or opportunity in which people find themselves. These could be illustrations related to the present document, or a way of saying : 'This situation in which I was placed is much more to the point than the matters you mention.' (3) It is hoped that some may take the whole paper and rewrite it, so that in language and imagery it fits their specific lay situation. It is hoped that they will send copies of any new versions to the Department, and also use them among groups for which they have been interpreted, and report results. (4) It is possible that material of some weight may emerge from the thinking undertaken in different parts of the world, and that out of it could come a study document. Please suggest lines of study, and give some substance to your suggestions."

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is one man with his workmates, finding his work straightforward and interesting, and quite a different man with his family, showing little imagination, so that his wife has a nervous breakdown and his child runs away from home.

At different times many people feel the pointlessness of life, sense that there is a wholeness to which all must belong, and live as different persons in different worlds of work, home, leisure, sport, community activity.

* * *

It would be good to have Christians examine these concerns together or with those outside the Church, and to uncover the real problems and hopes which face them in their own situations regarding man's life in one and many worlds. This demands a lively and open humility before situations as they actually are, before human beings as they actually are. It requires us to check ideals against the evidence provided by careful study. It means we must welcome insights from unexpected quarters. In his whole life Jesus Christ was open to other human beings, flexible in dealing with circumstances, and often mastering situations in surprising ways. Christians living by his power must be willing to expose themselves to life's realities and must be flexibly available to do his will. To this end the following points are suggested for discussion :

1. There is a claim to be examined in the Bible that this world is in fact one world, a unity made up, by God's intention, of many diverse elements. Jesus Christ grips this life together and determines its destiny. His redeeming work extends to the whole creation. It is in relation to that work that everything which exists gains meaning. The mystery of God's will is "that in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven and which are on earth" (Ephesians 1 : 9, 10). This is something which can be grasped only by faith — that is, by a kind of total insight checked by all the evidence one can bring to bear, and on which in the end one bets one's life.

Do you see signs of the existence of such a unity (e.g. in the culture produced by science and technology, in the fact that world hunger and disease are now seen to affect all men directly, in our necessity to love one another as nations if we are not to be blown up together) ? Do you think that the unity of the Church is of interest to God apart from the unity of the world ?

On what ground and in what way are any such signs to be connected with the person and work of Jesus Christ ? Can development of world unity be taken to indicate the advancement of his kingdom ? What new and menacing evils accompany this development, for example in the structure of society ? Why have they emerged and how are they to be clearly recognized ? What kind of wrestling must we undertake in partnership with Jesus Christ, to make real in our time his victory over evil ?

2. If we can say at all that Jesus Christ is at work in the world today — behind the scenes, as it were — and is promoting a unity not only of the Church, not even only of mankind, but of the whole creation, then we shall need to reassess what it means to stand alongside him and be a co-worker with him. The basic maintenance work which men and women do daily provides a means of sharing in his upholding of all things. Development work provides a means of sharing in his bringing forward of all things to their goal. Political work has to do with the sustaining of human societies, and the manifestation of his righteous rule in right dealings and right relationships between men. The arts express what men do (both revelling and responding) with his pull on the human spirit. There is a work of recognition to be done in all this which must be undertaken corporately — of spotting him at work and helping others to see him at work ; of offering him willing rather than involuntary co-operation. There is need of a sharpened awareness of how, at these points of possible co-operation in his purposes, men may in fact thwart his will and give evil a foothold.

How are we to assess the meaning of "workers together with Christ' in this context? How is a farmer, an artist, a politician, or an industrial worker to express the reality of being a fellow-worker with Christ? Where do Trade Unions and Employers' Federations, government and voluntary agencies come into this?

Does working together with Christ also at times place a Christian in conflict with his society? Where should this conflict come in your experience?

3. How can a human being be one person in the various smaller worlds in which he spends his days, instead of a play-actor playing different roles? And how may these worlds be related to one another (in the life of a community)? One temptation of the Church at this point is probably just to lump different things together, and to say there should be one Christian way of going about life which applies to every sphere. But it is of God that these different worlds exist and make their distinctive claims upon us. The terms industry presents to those who have to work in it, the terms a Town Council presents, the terms a home presents, are different. Human beings must spell life out according to the terms of the area of life in which they operate at a particular time; yet they must remain dependably the same persons at heart.

How many Christians learn to give these different spheres their due, so that the particular work for which each exists may be recognized and honoured, yet so that they are not treated as being independent and autonomous — unrelated to an overall purpose — as if one could wear whatever suit of ethics proved most comfortable in each situation?

Does it matter whether the Christian's obedience is not recognizable as such by others, and may lead him to actions which appear inconsistent?

Has the Church become simply one of these small worlds competing with others for a share of men's interest and time?

4. It has been said, "A Christian is to be recognized by his flexibility, and in a changing society, by his mobility. Through forgiveness he is always able to start anew. Because he is held by God, he is free to live in different worlds and yet able to bring different roles to a unity."

Do you agree that these must be marks of Christian life today?

By way of illustration and (we hope) encouragement, we print the following five reactions to an earlier draft of the foregoing paper, selected by the Laity Department from contributions received through correspondence in 1964.

Comments on "Man in One and Many Worlds"

I

By a student group in Lund, Sweden

1. Is the world one world?

There are new signs of unity in the world as a whole. At the same time there are signs of new disintegration. There is also evidence of growing stratification in society. The situation is complex.

A certain measure of unity is experienced and expressed by certain groups of people across national, racial and cultural boundaries. Two of such groups are the intellectuals and youth. A professor of technology at Lund understands his colleagues

in Tokyo much better than he understands a professor of literature at Lund ; a teenager in the Swedish northern woods understands fellow-Beatles from Brazil better than he understands his own parents. This sign of disintegration seems to follow signs of unity.

It is not easy to find unity in the culture of modern society. Science and technology on the one side, and humanism and theology on the other, seldom talk to each other. Sometimes it looks as if culture itself has become the subject for some specialists. Very few, perhaps nobody at all, sees the wholeness and totality and achieves an overall insight.

Problems of man have also become many and varied, e.g. problems of work, family life, health, and religion. Here, again, there is need for people who understand the whole, and help men and women to identify and isolate their problems before they are sent to specialists.

Division and disintegration are everywhere. There are splits even in our way of thinking. Perhaps it is right to say that we have a split in common !

2. Wrestling in partnership with Jesus Christ

The problem of living in many worlds is keenly felt by many students, including Christians. What does it mean to be a Christian, what does loyalty to the Church mean in all these different worlds of laboratories, seminars, clinics, student councils, etc. ? These are experienced as burning questions. Some in our group felt that the Church ought to remain ahead of the world, like the pillar of cloud or fire that led the people of Israel on through the desert. Others felt that the Church must of necessity share in the general quest, in the uncertainty, in the grouping for the way ahead, that everybody feels in the extremely complicated world of today — and that it should say that it does.

As for solving actual problems, the Church does not have a single answer ! In spite of a common basis of faith, Christians differ in their opinions on actual problems and situations. The devil is at work both inside and outside the Church. Such a recognition may provide the starting-point for dialogue within the Church, and between those in the Church and those outside.

3. Co-workers with Christ

Is your job the heart of your life ? Perhaps it is, if you are an academician, but probably it is not if you are an industrial worker. In this age of automation, only very few workers have a clear idea of the meaning and purpose of their work, or any sense of creativity and fulfilment. Perhaps in the near future all will get their living even if half the population is not working.

Our calling as co-workers with Christ must be considered in relation to life as a whole, and not merely in terms of our work or profession. If we limit it to our work alone, we shall find it very hard to see the place of our work in the totality of the work of God. We may be tempted to find an easy way out through our rationalizations and justifications. It will also mean that those who fail to see the relevance of their work to the purpose of God, will be led to dejection and despair, without the joyful experience of being co-workers with Christ.

Neither can we limit our calling as co-workers with Christ to our specific tasks in the Church. We are co-workers with Christ in all aspects of life, and at all time, be it leisure time, social occasions, time with the family, or time spent in work for society. Further, being co-workers with Christ does not merely mean defending the Church and its dogmas. It may often mean working against the dehumanizing forces of our present secularized society. Explicit Christian witness is definitely part of our calling

as co-workers with Christ; but in the present situation this is often difficult and nearly impossible. In such situations our very "presence" may be the only possible means of expressing our co-workership. In fact such "Christian presence" in various situations and aspects of life, may prove to be the most effective and dynamic process of Christian witness, often leading men to direct encounter with Christ.

4. One person in many worlds

To live in many worlds is like being caught between two trenches and fired at from both sides. It is life in tension between at least two worlds to which one belongs. This is a problem commonly experienced by preachers. Many advocate a solution through part-time ministries. But clergymen are not alone in this experience of tension through living in many worlds.

This concern for the dilemma of modern man must not, however, lead us to overemphasize the necessity for unity. To be the same man in all situations, and never to be influenced by different environments, would result in a lack of engagement. Rather than playing a general role as "a Christian in the world", we should follow Kierkegaard in trying to find the right way of acting in each single situation, independent of our own history, because every situation is unique.

5. Separated to God in the world

Do we want a wall between the world and us? Not if that means that the Church is not a body in the world, with responsibility towards the world. The Church is called to be in the world, and for the world.

In our search for concrete tasks in our situations of work, we perhaps too often begin with life in the Church as the life of the Christian. Our starting point should be the fact of our common humanity and solidarity with all men, and from there we should go on to think of the Church. Perhaps the Church is only a shelter where one rests between working periods outside. Do we want to dwell in the shelter all the time, because we think it easier to be a Christian there?

II

By a church group in Scotland

1. One of the facts which have emerged from modern science and technology is that men and nations are interdependent. The rich nations of the world can never live in peace so long as half the world goes hungry. In the Bomb mankind is faced with a challenge — to chase life is to follow Jesus — the way — the truth — and the life, or to reject his claims, and that means death.

The work for world unity is an essential preliminary to the coming of the kingdom of God on earth and the Church must be in the forefront of this movement. The unity of the Church will be the first-fruits of this world unity and is of interest to God, we believe, only if it is related to the need to remind people that there is only one God and this is His world.

This must mean that though the various churches may have different interpretations of certain truths, there has to be a unity of spirit and love between them, and that any group or sect which aims at maintaining or further creating divisons is acting in direct contravention to the will of God.

2. In our opinion, the real evil in our society today is that the dividing line between good and evil is becoming so blurred. As a nation we are so permissive — particularly fathers. We have abdicated our responsibilities to the youth of the country, so that they have to make their own standards of morality.

3. There are certain jobs and professions which are obviously related to Christ's ministry of healing and reconciliation. Doctors, nurses, probation officers, welfare workers, etc.

The real difficulty arises when a Christian's daily work is meaningless, and even worse when the industry in which a man is employed has an end-product which the employee believes to be contrary to the will of God. A Christian has to see the whole of his life, including his work, as being in some way a part of God's pattern for His world.

4. We feel that for the majority of church folk, the Church is another leisure activity competing for people's time with charitable organizations and recreational associations. It is this separation of the Church from the whole of life which leads people to have different ethics that can be applied to different situations. Christians can learn to give each sphere its due only when they see that all material things, all work, all human relationships have been redeemed, made holy, by the life and death and resurrection of Jesus.

The real danger of materialism is that it denies this truth and makes wealth, position and influence *the* aim in life.

5. So long as the Church is the body of Christ and the spirit of Jesus is at work within it, then there is a special fellowship, because the life which binds us together is the One which is the source of all fellowship.

The Church, as we know it, evolved through the years because of a deep need for corporate worship, but it needs to be continually renewed from within. We believe that even if the whole institution of church life were to go, Christ's Church would go on. After all, we did not choose him, he chose us, and as no man can be a Christian in isolation, sooner or later new communities of Christian people would be formed.

6. The real problem of this and every community today is that to so many people this appears to be a godless world.

Since we know that this is God's world, it follows that we, the Church, have failed to represent Christ, in that though there have been great individual Christians, the Church has not been seen as the body of Christ.

One of the ways in which this could be done, would be to form small groups in different parts of a parish, so that all the parish could see God's people in action.

Our local problems are mainly those of the young people and of the relationship between the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church. Many of our young people, as in other towns, are drifting into delinquency, living for kicks, experimenting with sex. We don't know the solutions ; it is after all a national problem. One of the ways this church has tried to tackle it, is by forming an Open Door Youth Club, outside control of the Kirk Session, but run by sincere church folk, and aimed at those young teenagers who have no connection with the Church. At the same time through Bible classes we are trying to give the deeper meaning of Christ's teaching to youngsters.

Our local church has joined with the local Roman Catholic Church in two social functions to raise money for the Freedom from Hunger Campaign. But the building

up of mutual trust and love between the churches — difficult enough already — has been challenged by the formation of a local Orange Lodge. What effect this will have, we do not know.

We would suggest that the Church's mission of healing and reconciliation should have been mentioned in your document. As a group who are concerned with God's work of healing, through prayers for the sick, we believe that the wholeness of society depends on the Church making itself available as channels of His healing power.

III

By a group in Zürich, Switzerland

This is the summary of discussion in a group which consisted of three economists, three theologians, two social workers, two secretaries, two housewives, a business man, a teacher, a working woman, and a study leader.

Our discussion dealt primarily with the following three topics :

1. Is the world really one, and to what extent ?
2. How are we to understand these different roles ?
3. How can these roles be unified ?

As we began our discussion, the standardization of the world as a result of technology and science, which no one questioned, was not seen in relationship to any biblical statements. The word "unity" was in fact almost instantaneously regarded as an obligation to seek a single point of view.

In the discussion two points tended to be constantly confused : *(a)* the sense of obligation to *do* something (e.g., to give aid to developing countries, to join in the war on want), which was continually dulled by the recognition that all of our doing could only be as a drop in a bucket, and the realization that the time for a true world unity has not yet come ; and *(b)* emphasis on the importance of a *proper point of view* regarding these questions, in which it was pointed out that unity is basically invisible, or that at any rate it begins with the invisible (prayer, inwardness, etc.).

Probably one should say that we agreed first upon the following statement : Because the unity of the world is a fact, we can acknowledge our *responsibility* for the *whole world*. Each generation has its own particular task ; this should be *our* task. At first, responsibility may simply mean a felt concern for one another, without any further expression of this thorough common action. Unity does not necessarily presuppose unity of action.

One certainly cannot see signs of the approaching kingdom of God in external efforts towards unity or in welfare developments in the world. It was rightly said that one can see "signs of the End" in every century. On the other hand, it was emphasized that a minimal unity, e.g. unity and harmony within a business firm, were signs of hope, even if one doubted how much cosmic significance they might have. It was at least clear that the idea of a comprehensive unity was very new, and not well integrated into our thought patterns.

On this account, our group was not unanimous in its evaluation of the secularization of the world. Are we not exaggerating when we speak of this as a sign of hope ? Would it not be much more accurate to speak of the Church as being in retreat, giving

up one position after another? The contrary view was, however, expressed that the Church is not retreating, but rather re-aligning her divisions. We can now delegate certain areas (e.g. social work) to the state or to secular organizations. The Church thus becomes free for new tasks, and theology can truly become theology again.

* * *

We then turned to the question: How can one be a co-worker of Christ? We were confronted here too with the same dilemma, that we felt our possibilities to be very limited, yet did not want to underestimate the power of prayer and of positive thoughts in the task of maintaining the world. (The expressions "the upholding of all things" and "development work" in connexion with politics and art did not convince us as being apt. One member of the group thought that he detected in politics the opposites of conservation and of creation, and was therefore unhappy about the way in which politics and the sustaining of the world were equated.)

On the other hand, we noted that too often we just do not have the necessary courage really to start anything. Therefore we avoid urgent tasks in the world by joining a Christian group or organization rather than a secular organization, such as a trade union. It was said, in opposition to that, that we were not asked about definite actions, but rather about *the forms in which a Christian life expresses itself* in our professions and in given life situations.

We thus came to the question: *How can anyone see that I am a Christian?* We agreed almost at once that every conceivable example could be interpreted in a number of different ways, and that therefore no example could be completely convincing. It would perhaps be possible to recognize a Christian in terms of his willingness to start again even in hopeless situations, and in his willingness to give up his pride. Perhaps it can be seen when one stops trying to be a good example and simply gives witness to his solidarity with others. A Christian life today, as opposed to the ideas of earlier generations, is seen not in terms of constant observance of specific principles, such as abstinence, but rather in terms of ability freely to make decisions in each new concrete situation. Thus flexibility is required; but how can it be acquired and maintained? In this connexion, the necessity of having an internal attitude which remains stable, was also mentioned. Internal stability enables a person to come to new decisions. (Someone said, "You must have the same conscience in every different situation.") We also said that as Christians we may be confronted with certain situations in which we cannot do certain things and remain consistent. We live from Christ's impulses, and thus we know that we must renew our lives again and again. The only way, then, in which a Christian can be identified is in terms of his obedience to Christ, which is expressed in his constant readiness to serve.

* * *

Another line of thought which emerged on this theme was that we can recognize a Christian because the various roles which he must play are not isolated from one another. Perhaps one could say that these roles hold each other in balance, so that no one role becomes absolute. Because the Christian knows that none of these roles has final importance, he cannot take any one role with undue seriousness. We are thus able to see our fellow-man in and through all of our roles. This relationship to *other people,* to our partner, affects all of our different roles, and guarantees that they do not become isolated from each other. We were unanimous at this point, i.e., that a Christian must always be concerned for others.

It become obvious in the course of this discussion that the concept of different roles needs careful examination. Is it used in the way that contemporary social psychologists employ it, or in the naive fashion betrayed by the sentence about ethical

suits of clothing ? Roles are, in contemporary sociology, more or less objective social facts, i.e., predictables, not behavioral patterns which can be changed at will. The question raised here relates simply to a proper formulation. Different understandings of roles are at any rate often confused in this document. Nevertheless the problem posed in Point 3 remains a real one.

Special problems develop when a Christian has a leading function in a secular organization. For example, he may be required to call to task, or even to dismiss, an employee who neglects his job in order to do evangelism. That might be the only possible way for a Christian to run his concern fairly. On the other hand, it was nevertheless pointed out that there are situations where a person must speak directly, and where a Bible verse can have surprising effects. If we do not hold this door open, then the Bible will become a book which we only read in church, and the church a closed place which can only be visited in special garments. It was agreed that we are generally left alone in our profession and so easily fall into an individualistic Christianity. The Church's task should be to help equip its members to stand in the world. This could be done in groups which discuss questions like those in this paper.

At the end of our discussion one member said : "These roles and different clothes are not bad at all. The question is simply whether I am wearing the right clothes at the right time. We may remain constantly in the same circles and clothes, for fear of taking responsibility. The variety of our suits is not our only problem. If we try to wear the same clothing, we will all become mere conformists. We should have the proper suit for each different occasion, so that we will not all appear everywhere in our commando suits."

IV

By a Dutch sociologist

I begin with two reasons for my hesitating to comment on this paper. I am increasingly aware that the drawing in of people from different disciplines in any study project raises considerable terminological difficulties ; each person translates the problem into the concepts of his own discipline and starts theorizing about it, without any guarantee that the problem he has thus defined remains the same problem as that with which the others are dealing. Perhaps there should first be much more discussion concerning the *nature* of the problem on which one wants comment from different disciplines, before letting people in these various disciplines work upon it.

A second hesitation arises from the fact that sociologists have as yet so little common codified knowledge. You may therefore receive quite different comments from different sociologists, and wonder whether they are contradicting each other or are merely dealing with different aspects of the issues involved. Since I have not made special study of the issues in the paper, it is highly probable that I shall pick out irrelevant aspects. This said, I will now make an attempt to express my reactions to the issues raised in your document.

Definition of problems

My impression is that the problems of the paper are (partly) those, which in sociology are dealt with under the headings of *pluralism* and of *conflict*. Of these, pluralism may be dealt with under various headings. A helpful distinction in sociology is that between *social structure* (social relationships people are engaged in) and *culture* (opinions, knowledge, values[1] people hold on to).

[1] Religions, representing ultimate values and purposes, are implied in this concept.

Structural pluralism : social differentiation

By this is meant the fact that human forms of co-operation tend to get specialized more and more, as a result of an intensifying process of division of labour. Thus we have special organizational settings for each task in society to be accomplished, and the members of society are all the time moving from one setting to another, participating now in one, then in another, co-operative enterprise of task-fulfilment.

Within those co-operative enterprises, these different settings, there is division of labour too ; each participant has a place of his own to take, and a contribution of his own to render. This is what is meant by man's playing of various social roles. We must not isolate our understanding of social role from that of division of labour, or we shall assess it far too negatively. Moreover, it is not an ontological definition or characterization of "essence" — it is a conceptual tool for the analysis of a highly positive aspect of human life : namely, the fact that people co-operate and *together* accomplish those tasks that are necessary for the survival of their family, tribe, plant or society. It implies that each role is part of a complex structure of complementary roles, as each participant's contribution presupposes the contribution of others [1].

We cannot conclude from the variety of specialized co-operative enterprises that this amounts to a fragmentation of society into scattered bits. On the contrary, all the settings are interdependent. They presuppose one another's task-fulfilment. This again is inherent in the division of labour. We can easily trace that by any instance taken at random. A hospital, for example, is dependent on medical colleges for the provision of personnel. It could not function if there were no pharmaceutical industry, no instrument factories, no trade to distribute their products. It is interconnected with families in various ways : by supplying employment for the members of some, treatment for those of others, by helping in the birth of members of yet other families. It requires insurance companies to help pay for treatments. It is dependent on the functioning of the telephone system, on supply of electricity, water, and all the other public services.

Before stressing the differences between all these various settings, all these co-operative enterprises, we must first be aware that in their manifold interconnectedness they together constitute one world. We therefore refer to "social differentiation and interdependency" rather than to "pluralism" when indicating the complicatedness of social structure in modern society. To say that world unity is growing (as in your document) is to say that more and more people all over the globe are getting involved in such interdependent co-operative entreprises [2].

Cultural pluralism

None of these enterprises could function and co-operate with each other, if their participants did not share a large fund of tacit suppositions, codes of behaviour, knowledge, values and interests. The hospital presupposes that telephone operators do their duty, that wives see to the feeding and clothing of its personnel, that patients respect the order of the institution. All accept that there are working hours, that certain people have authority in some matters, that there are certain prices for the services rendered, that they are able to communicate because of a common language, etc. We

[1] Another misunderstanding is that our rendering of different and fragmentary contributions within different settings is characteristic of modern society. The complexity of differentiation between various settings certainly is this, but the individual taking of roles within various settings is also a general phenomenon, though the role structures of various settings may not be as complicated everywhere. In fact the concept "social role" was first used in cultural anthropology, i.e. in the study of primitive society.

[2] The term "organizational setting" does not merely refer to conscious and rationally planned organization, as in a factory or an association. Some degree of role differentiation and unconscious division of tasks is nearly always present where people gather.

are usually not aware of all these elements of culture ; we take them for granted and do not realize their immense importance for making human co-operation possible — until we find ourselves confronted with another society which does not possess them or which manifests different cultural presuppositions. Personally, for instance, I am always impressed when I trace how much of our daily functioning and moving about are based on our ability to read and write, how much indirect human communication is realized this way. Our traffic, our trade, our government — all assume this ability in our people. Count the amount of written clues to which we are reacting during the whole day, and we suddenly realize what an immense handicap it is in a society, if only 35% of its population can read and write.

But apart from literacy, there is an enormous amount of other cultural uniformity : language, acceptance of a certain system of government, acceptance of a certain system of exchanging goods and services (namely, by currency), recognition of a system of property, of rights and obligations, knowledge how to make use of services and consultants available in society, etc. In short, all the things which we have to teach to children, represent an enormous fund of culture [1], which is a *common* possession.

Now a great deal of this common culture is closely tied up with our way of solving practical problems by means of technology. There is quite a discussion whether technology is the product of western culture, of a certain rationality, frugality and diligence, inherent to the western (and, as some say, Christian) mind, or whether technology is the causal factor, making deep inroads on our thinking and feeling. We cannot solve this question in sociology, which factor is cause and which is effect ; we therefore usually speak of interaction, interdependency, mutual reinforcement, reciprocal influence, etc. The important point, however, is not how to *explain* the occurrence of this fund of culture that accompanies technology, but to find out in what it *consists*. Does it consist *only* of a way of resolving practical problems (e.g. producing food, curing illness, organizing factories) or does it *also* affect the rest of our culture — our tastes, our way of thinking, our ethics and our religion ? One can find representatives of both positions. Thus many people in India or other developing countries believe that technology implies certain practical solutions and knowledge only, and that it can exist alongside their inherited religion, art, tastes, habits, etc. This is the position of those who want to import western industry but not western culture.

On the other hand, we also find those who believe that there is only one uniform technological culture, which is now gradually spreading over the globe. This view is usually accompanied by a kind of pessimistic prophecy of doom, expecting loss of creativity, uniformity of taste, loss of personal responsibility, a grey colourless "mass-culture" all over the world.

Personally I am inclined to look for a position somewhere in between these extremes, assuming that technological culture certainly does away with *some* elements of older cultures, but leaves a wide latitude of cultural diversity at all levels : at the aesthetic, as well as the ethical, religious, juridical or political level. Moreover, technology is not a fixed, but a changing entity. It was accompanied by liberal economies yesterday, national welfare states today, and perhaps more liberalized international regional markets tomorrow. It made for conflict between employers and employees yesterday, and for "collusion" of both today at the expense of old-age pensions and collective expenditure on social welfare. It implied intensive political strife, public and corporate life, yesterday ; and love of privacy, stress of family values, today. What is meant by all these examples is that technological culture may exist alongside a variety in ways of life, preferences, and ethical values too, even if some types of belief (say, magical or dogmatic ones) may be disappearing under its influence. It is difficult, however,

[1] I am using "culture" in the American sense : implying values, beliefs, habits, practical and theoretical knowledge, assumptions, or in short, a way of life. This in contrast to the former German concept of "Kultur", indicating art and science only.

to say *what* exactly is disappearing. Does the present enormous number of sects, which hold the queerest and most irrational types of beliefs, constitute a marginal phenomenon, and do they occur only among those groups that live at the edge of a technological society, or do they fully belong to technological culture ? Whatever the answer, those holding a "middle position" are convinced that the diversity of religions, values, tastes, ways of life is still enormous and will remain so, even if the differences of yesterday (e.g. denominational differences) whose importance is shrinking do not occur today, and we may witness again new religions, new values, in short, new differences, in the future.

To say this amounts to asserting that, in spite of a great deal of common culture necessary for the functioning of technological society, there is also cultural pluralism. It implies that a variety of ultimate meanings, of definitions of purpose people attach to life, will continue, and that thus Christianity will remain "a" religion, propagating one possible answer to the human search for meaning, in competition with numerous others (see the question in your document). The fact that technology is spreading over the world need not mean that a final consensus in values, or a uniformity of culture, is to be expected, much less that Christ will generally be accepted, judging from a sociological point of view. Moreover, increase of interdependence and contact between people also can mean increase of conflict. The future seems very much open for men to choose.

Conflict and competition

Conflict and competition occur in various forms. I have the impression that in the paper three forms are mentioned :

a) conflict between the demands made upon the individual through various social roles ;

b) conflict between values ;

c) conflict between people or groups.

Conflict between demands of various roles is the simplest case. People possess only a limited amount of time, energy, money, and attention to spend. This may cause them to refrain from participating in various "co-operative enterprises" that appeal to them, i.e. to make a selection as to the roles they engage in, or to make a compromise in the way they perform their roles, e.g. by either being an unattentive husband or neglecting some of the demands of one's occupation. The Church certainly is one of many co-operative enterprises demanding the individual's time and attention. It stands in a situation of competition, but this in itself is no indication of ineffectiveness, since this is the case with every "co-operative enterprise". Important only is the question with whom it competes and for what. Does the Church compete with the family and with the recreational industry for the individual's leisure time, or does it compete with other value-promoting agencies for his loyalty and his attitude to life ? In the first case the Church may be ineffective, in the latter case it may have influence in many other "worlds" in which the individual participates.

Conflict of values need not coincide with the former conflict. It can occur within the carrying out of *one* social role, as e.g. with the mother who hesitates between strictness and effectiveness in her upbringing of a child, or the employer who can be torn between the objective necessity of dismissing a certain employee and subjective consideration for his special case. Most of the rules in human co-operative enterprise embody compromises between various values : where speed is required, there is conflict with the democratic value of letting everybody have his way in decisions ; where efficiency of organization is required, there is conflict with the values of developing spontaneity and personal initiative. Impartiality and avoidance of arbitrariness are certainly valuable, yet can do harm in individual cases which need special treatment.

Perhaps this conflict of values between which the individual can be torn, is in the nature of the human situation. It is a classical theme in literature. It *may* coincide with a conflict between his various roles. That is the case when various "settings" in which he is a participant, claim not only an individual's time and energy, but primarily his loyalty, or a certain ethical conduct — for instance, when one's church membership requires that one treats negroes as equals, whereas one's colleagues in a business firm expect a superior attitude, or when one's family expects one to favour a nephew who applies for a job in one's firm, while there is a second candidate who seems more competent.

These conflicts belong to human existence as such, and are no special consequence of the fact that man has to live in "many worlds", or rather, that he is a participant in many co-operative enterprises nowadays. It may be a question for investigation whether our technological society stresses values which increase the occurrence of these types of conflicts. There are many attempts at characterizing the culture of technological society — which I have not looked up. They mention as characteristic such values as efficiency, impartiality, rationality, industriousness, self-reliance, an enquiring mind, etc., but also such values as success, acquisitiveness, prestige-mindedness, competitiveness, recklessness, etc. Are these characterizations right? Does technology produce "worlds" where these values reign, *must* reign for their proper functioning? If this is the case, then there is a chance that the manifoldness of "worlds" constitutes a danger, as it may bring people to the point of ignoring these facts in order to avoid ethical conflict. We know the attitude of "business is business", "the firm is not a charitable institution", *quod licet Jovi non licet bovi*. This has been called "compartmentalization", or application of different norms for different situations (see your document). The last quotation indicates that the problem is not a new one!

Meanwhile it is important to consider that this is partly *necessary* and legitimate. We *do* need different codes of behaviour in different settings, because they serve different purposes. What is right in one situation, need not be right in another (in the Dutch resistance movement during the German occupation, cheating of the government was, for instance, the right thing to do). This remark touches the problem of legalism and pharisaism, which is also a perennial problem of humanity. We *need* different ethics for different situations, but this *can* turn into the bad faith of "compartmentalization".

Conflict between individuals or between groups is not dealt with so much in the paper. Where however "unity" is mentioned, it might be translated in the sociological sense of "absence of conflict" between individuals and groups [1]. At the base of this type of conflict there is not so much a conflict of values or between role demands, but rather a conflict of interests. We may make it a subject for investigation how much technological society increases these types of conflict, and even sanctions them by stressing such values as acquisitiveness, prestige, and individualism. However, this conflict is also an old one, and equally old are the human attempts at canalizing it and fencing it in by law, by jurisdiction, by delimitation of rights and obligations, or by mitigating codes. Competition may thus be sanctioned in a free economy (and we may consider whether it has a positive function), but "unfair" competition is usually condemned.

The division of labour in society meanwhile implies that there is also a certain degree of harmony or complementariness of interests — that by realization of one's own purposes one renders a service to others. This was the philosophy of liberalism — since then we have realized that this occurs in a certain degree, but may lead to grave inequalities and exploitation by the powerful. In other words, the harmony between

[1] Again a terminological difficulty. The term "unity" does not function in our conceptual apparatus. We discern either consensus (in opinions) or conformity (in behaviour), or interdependency (through co-operation, for example). This is an important issue, at which I am trying to work in respect of the question in what "church unity" should consist.

the purposes of all the different individuals and groups is certainly not perfect, and human efforts at restricting the pursuit of interests, of mitigating competition, and of canalizing conflict, remain necessary.

This is all I can now say. I wonder whether it deals with the problem set out in your paper. Anyway this is only sociology. Your paper asks for interpretations of social facts in the light of faith. I am willing to give that, but then it can only be a purely personal venture, in which I cannot claim the "authority" of any special training. It would be more authoritative if theologians and sociologists would venture into serious and long-term *common* study of these issues. It is my impression that this has still not taken place up till now. Certainly incidental conferences have been held (usually on a too general level and covering too many issues), but this is not enough to overcome the enormous terminological difficulties. My impression is that they have only caused frustration on both sides. This need not be, if only we could have patient long-term co-operation. I do not hope to have solved any problem with my foregoing comments on the paper, but I do hope to have indicated that such long-term co-operation can be fruitful.

V

Dialogue at a Swedish Centre

The director of this Centre has contributed the following record of a dialogue which took place in a group consisting of an editor (E), an artist (A), a writer of novels and dramas (W), a theologian (T), and the director himself (D). After a brief introductory statement, this discussion proceeded as follows :

E : Some things to be found in a welfare society show signs which belong to the messianic kingdom : health, as much food as one needs, and so forth. Do they belong only to the level of creation ? Something of salvation happens also at the material level. Some signs exist only at the level of creation, yet are signs of God's kingdom. I am not sure that the Lutheran distinction between creation and salvation is a right one.

D : You mean that creation is loaded with eternity ?

E : I mean that it is not possible to make a division between creation and salvation, because they are so closely linked together. For a long time salvation followed consecutively on the history of creation. Is there not a third way of thinking ?

D : I think it is that way that I have tried to take. Everywhere there is a prophetic dimension to creation.

E : This ought to be more deliberately introduced as a third theological alternative.

D : "The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail..."

E : This is the prophetic sign that the day of salvation is near. Something of that view of evolution may be stressed without speaking of evolution in terms of "cultural optimism".

D : So you mean that not only the so-called sorrows, "the great tribulation" and the famines spoken of in the New Testament, are the signs that God's kingdom is near, but also, in the same degree, affluence and abundance ?

T : Is there no room for some sort of doctrine of analogy, such as Barth has developed in the last part of his theological writing ? Is there not an analogy between God's kingdom and these earthly signs ? Many have tried to maintain that where Christianity comes in, something is changed, for instance in anthropology. Such new things would not be possible, if Jesus had not lived. The new things are then not only a prophecy, but the beginning of a realization. The idea that everything has a dark possibility behind it — explorations and inventions may always be used to good or to evil purpose — does not exclude this. If anything was messianic, it was the life of Jesus himself. The life of Jesus produced these two opposites. Just as one can say that Jesus gave an injection of love into this world, so can one also say that Jesus gave an injection of hate into the world, a hatred which drew him to death and crucified him. It is also part of the messianic signs that the power of the devil appears more strongly than ever. So the dualism which characterizes this world does not invalidate its messianic nature.

D : I think we mean two different things when we speak of "messianic". By "messianic", you mean the fruits of the appearance of Christ and of preaching the Gospel. In this I thoroughly agree with you. But when I used the word "messianic" I meant something analogous to Communistic messianism, where new possibilities are regarded as being mystically loaded. If these possibilities are developed — with or without the Gospel — they will bring forth the new kingdom. Thus did the Nazis regard the "Third Kingdom". This is not a messianism which expresses the advent of a messiah or actual experience.

E : The way of thinking on these problems which is reflected in the document from Geneva is typically western. Social need finds no place in it.

D : You mean that it is a little too early to ponder over the question whether a messianic situation is at hand or not, when millions of people are starving ?

A : According to the document, life generally should have a meaning. But that question is without meaning. What is possible to ask is what meaning life has for me. This is a fruitful question, for after considering it, I am able to act and to create a meaning in my life, and for others. In the same way, its view of Christ has been depicted as something which is *generally* applicable, instead of applicable *to individuals*. This is the kind of thing which is held before people, yet has nothing to do with the inner human being.

T : The document is the sign of a reaction that has been going on for rather a long time now, which directs an attack against a too individualistic view, in which Christ has to do only with the individual and his relation to God.

The problem which we face is whether humanity is to survive or not. Then it does not get us anywhere if some people in an affluent society take a gloomy view of life. — Has God meant that we shall continue to live on this earth ? Has he meant that we shall use our intelligence to make life as tolerable as possible for each other ? What has he meant about our "replenishing the earth" ?

The problems of meaning in a global perspective have not been faced in the document. But we must affirm *that* total solidarity which is a consequence of our living here on this round globe. It is this hundred per cent solidarity which Jesus realizes in a small place in a small country at a certain point of time. Now for the first time we are beginning to see what such solidarity involves. Now this one hundred per cent solidarity is demanded from us. It is the question of our ultimate situation, the End, which carries a messianic or eschatological meaning.

D : *Then we are ready to begin answering the questions under Point 1 in the document*

According to the document, the signs of culture produced by science and technology lead to the question : are these signs that "the time is about to be fulfilled" ? The consequence of what we said just now is something different : the time was fulfilled, already once in the past. But now we have to appropriate the consequences of

that, or perish. It is necessary to accept the possibility of realizing a unity of love instead of a unity of hate, total peace instead of total war. We have a vocation to be faithful to the revelation, or else we shall betray it. The sign is not a sign that we have now realized God's will thus far, or that this will has been accomplished in us. The sign is a sign in the sense of our having now come to the point of decision.

"Do you think that the unity of the Church is of interest to God apart from the unity of the world ?" — This is a common way of thinking inside the churches. The Church has first to be one and show to the world what unity is. Nothing is more unrealistic than to think that. We see it if we, for instance, remember how things are here in Sweden and within the Church of Sweden. No, the unity exists only at one point, in the Gospel and in the Mass. It is wrong to make a difference here between the unity of the Church and the unity of the world. The Gospel is a call to all people. All have to go a long way to fulfil it, and all have got the same distance along the path of its realization.

T : In the High Priestly prayer of Christ, it is "their" (first the group of disciples and then further) oneness which will get the world to believe that Christ is sent by the Father.

D : That is true. But what actually happens at the moment when obedience to Christ becomes important for somebody ? Is not that man then within the unity ? The equation in Christ's High Priestly prayer is precisely the same. I have been so disappointed in all groups and all religious unity movements that I cannot afford to believe that the Church as an organization necessarily has to be patched up first. I believe much more in God's word and sacraments. There for all people is a possibility of seeing a vision, of finding a vocation ; the Church is for me the Gospel.

A : Do we not need a new formulation of the task of the Church, or what is meant by the Church, so that one can get rid of the idea that unity of the Church would be a guarantee for the unity of the world ?

T : What is said is only that the Church is a witness for Christ. Is not this what she has to be ? The fallen world is also a unity.

D : In the third paragraph of Point 1, we are asked for some concrete examples of how to make use of the possibilities we have, and how to give them direction.

W : Let us not talk about the welfare society in this connection !

E : Possibly that welfare society has a tendency of forming a circle round itself.

D : When at one and the same time there are people in a condition of need and people who are well off, there is an enormous possibility of denying Christ through closing one's door to that situation of need. We have rather a lot of money at the moment, and it is always difficult for rich people to enter the kingdom of God.

W : Christianity is for people without property. It becomes an impossibility in a rich society. It does not function in a welfare society. It is possible that one can find beyond this a paradoxical solution. Rather than changing the Gospel, so that it may suit society, one ought to state the discrepancy.

D : One has to keep the wound of conscience open.

W : Perhaps more than that.

T : Incapacity to realize the truth is a deep-seated sin, I think. If the Gospel exists for anything, it must be for such sins.

W : Gandhi turned against the Christians : "You are resigned instead of seeking improvement, and are content with that resignation. I want to believe that I can get better. If I cannot, then I live in discord." He turned against drawing peace from such resignation and regarding it as a sort of solution.

T : If it comes to resignation, then it is wrong. That is not the meaning I'm after.

D : Should we not in our answer point at this very danger — "To receive the grace of God in vain", to make oneself comfortable with forgiveness of sins ?

W : In the Gospels I see a practical vision, which Jesus gave to these people without property and I am sure he believed that this was capable of realization on earth.

D : The disciples were not without property. The sons of Zebedee were employers, and the fishing industry must have been rather profitable. I think one has romanticized the disciples, exaggerating their poverty...

T : With regard to the question of nuclear weapons, what has prevented the WCC expressing itself on this question is that the East has politically profited by the anti-nuclear weapon idea. The East has taken over that idea on a contract. In that way the WCC has been prevented from aligning itself with one standpoint or the other, and has had to work only with the problem itself.

D : Then we should be able to answer that question : "What kind of wrestling must we undertake in partnership with Jesus Christ ?" We must emphasize that more fearless work on the question of nuclear weapons is required than has hitherto been done.

E : Ought we not to criticize the absolute answers which are asked for ? "What kind of wrestling must we undertake..." — We have met this to the point of satiety in all ecumenical documents. "What must be the Christian solution ?"

D : So on the one side there is a tendency to ask for recipes of the kind, "a Christian does not swear, a Christian does not smoke", etc. On the other side there is a fear about concrete solutions. One escapes to generalized phrases. "This is a question of conscience." One man may do thus, but another thus. In this way we often run away from important decisions.

Point 2 — "How are we to assess the meaning of 'workers together with Christ' ?"

T : All these professional people are dealing with other people. They have responsibility for a certain sector of society. They serve others in what they are doing. In this network of responsibility, demands appear. These demands are more total than we can afford. To a Christian, this is part of his sanctification — a part of God's work with him. The Christian's situation is that he has to say yes to the demands, try to realize them and be ruined in face of them, get lifted up and given a new start.

D : At last the word "vocation" has begun to be an ecumenical *commune bonum*. But I think one has to be aware of the risk in this. Often it is spoken about the cold world where Christians have to go out and freeze. But it is in this cold world where "eight hours a day" cannot accomplish anything, and allows for nothing but serving one's neighbour. Here it is *not enough to be just "a farmer" or "an artist"* — as if one had done one's duty when one had done it in one's profession. We have responsibility for the wholeness of society, for what is happening in a lot of other sectors. At every point we are citizens of society.

T : That is true ; "together with Christ" is not something that can be *added* to the situation.

D : One has to see that the situation is the whole situation of society.

W : But with regard to writing and suchlike you have reacted against giving a poetical work a special Christian function ! You have said : "Do a good work of art."

D : There I have faced the task of the Christian artist. But it is very difficult for me to believe in a *pure* art, an art separated from social reality and the problems of our neighbours.

A : The question in the document concerns how we are to characterize the perils of our modern age. We have to try to keep the balance. There is a tendency to depend more and more on institutions, and institutions deprive people of their individual responsibility. Art is a manifestation of reaction against a technological world.

D : You mean that the special task of art is to make itself a barricade against going in this direction ?

Point 3 — "How may Christians learn to give these different spheres their due..."

D : Very often people in the Church of Sweden, and in other Christian denominations, have expressed their opinions about all possible difficulties, and especially in sermons are people given a doctor's prescription of how to live. But this has been advice from without. The right way is for everyone in his own situation to seek the right solution, based on the Gospel — and in co-operation with others who are in the same situation.

T : Greater demands will then be made upon preaching. In the sermon and in worship Christians should get the spiritual help they require to orient themselves. They cannot simply rely on the special edification of the Church circle.

D : The question is this : is there a possibility of spiritual exercises that are helpful as regards the programme of which we have spoken, which yet do not belong to that collection of habits which are conventionally regarded as typical for a Christian ?

T : The Christian community is often spoken of in the debate on secularization. Is it possible that the Christian community, gathered for worship, indicates anything in its prayers, hymns, and so forth, which can be apprehended as the marks of a kind of ghetto attitude ? There have surely been tendencies in that direction. One has feared that these traditional expressions of Christian togetherness could separate Christians from other people. And so one has dreamed of a Christian way of living which is a hundred per cent secular, and thus could not possibly separate a Christian outwardly from other people.

D : Dora, in the novel "Pious Murders" by Lars Ahlin[1], is so afraid of being mistaken for a pietist that she has to seek churches where nobody knows her, to be able to go to communion. I think the author has hit the difficulty rather well. The problem is that when a common man goes to communion, people say : "Aha, now he has become a Christian. Now he is in the circle of the pious folk !" But if he does not go to communion, he falls victim to another Pharisaism. Now suddenly *this* seems to be the right thing. Just as before one was not allowed to dance, now one is not allowed to go to communion. This is equally idiotic. It is a fact that one needs the Holy Scripture, one needs prayers, one needs communion. Nothing has happened to change that fact.

[1] A famous Swedish writer.